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State Representative Jeff Espich

Room 401, Statehouse
200 W. Washington Street
Indianapolis, IN 46204



A Message from State Representative

Jeff Espich

This past legislative session required action and decisions on many crucial issues. One of the most important tasks was to formulate Indiana's budget for the next two years, a budget that provides funding for critical government services including education, public safety, and Medicaid.

Another imperative issue was devising and implementing an economic development strategy to restart Indiana's struggling economy. House Republicans were able to steer the debate this session toward economic development, to bring Indiana's economy into the twenty-first century.

Now that the first session of the 113th Indiana General Assembly has concluded, it is my privilege to update you on the results and changes to state law that may affect you. This post-session newsletter provides details on the major issues of session including the state's biennial budget and our economic development initiatives.

You also will find contact information so that you may keep me informed of any questions or concerns. Please do not hesitate to contact me whenever necessary.

Sincerely,

Jeff Espich



How to Contact Representative Espich:

Statehouse Office:
Room 401, Statehouse
200 W. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

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Statehouse Telephone:
1-800-382-9841

E-mail Address:
H82@in.gov

Visit my website
for more information at:

www.in.gov/H82

IS THE STATE HOLDING UNCLAIMED PROPERTY THAT BELONGS TO YOU?

I was recently notified by Attorney General Steve Carter's office that it's possible some residents in my district have unclaimed property that could be of value to them. Under a law passed by the Indiana General Assembly and revised in 1995, personal property and money that has gone unclaimed for some time is turned over to the Attorney General's Unclaimed Property Division. Unclaimed property is returned to the State after it has been left with a "holder" (such as a bank, insurance company, or other business or organization) and there has been no owner-generated activity in the account for a set period of time.

The Attorney General's Office holds the property for 25 years while attempting to locate the rightful owner or their heirs. During this time individuals who are legally entitled may file a claim for the property with the Unclaimed Property Division.

Some types of unclaimed property are bonds, savings and checking accounts, credit balances, insurance proceeds, safe deposit box contents, deposits or overpayments, stocks/dividends, utility deposits, estate proceeds, and uncashed traveler's checks and money orders. It does not consist of real estate, furniture, etc.

It's easy and free to find out if you have property owed to you:

1. Check legal notices in your local paper that are posted periodically
2. Log on to www.indianaunclaimed.com and follow the instructions
3. Call the Attorney General's Unclaimed Property Division at 1-866-462-5246

For more information regarding the 2003 General Assembly, visit **www.in.gov/legislative**

Right Track Indiana

I'm extremely proud of our efforts this session to improve Indiana's economic outlook. Our Right Track Indiana legislative agenda created a vision to redefine how government works and re-ignite our stalled economic engine. By putting forth a plan that creates jobs immediately and attracts investment to our state for the long-term, House Republicans have taken the first step to put Indiana on the right track.

While we still have much work ahead of us to rein in our state's spending habits, we are proud of our accomplishments on the economic growth front. In the end, we succeeded by having 19 of the 24 House Republican endorsed initiatives enacted this session.

Our consensus plan focused on four strategies to diversify Indiana's economy and attract new industries while sustaining our manufacturing sector and improving the environment for existing employers:

- **Redesigning Government** – To improve the way Indiana does business, making our state more marketable and setting benchmarks for continuous improvement.
- **Tax Structure Improvements** – To further enhance the Indiana tax code to offer incentives to private investment in both new equipment and skilled employees.
- **Strategic Investments** – To assist our universities, improve technology infrastructure, and assist rural economic development.
- **Targeted Incentives** – To support ailing economic sectors and take advantage of opportunities to create jobs.

The most significant breakthroughs include the creation of the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) to restructure the way Indiana executes its statewide economic policy and a new Government Efficiency "Hoosier Grace" Commission established to clean up waste and inefficiency in state government. Both bodies will be appointed on July 1, 2003, and the new IEDC will take over all state commerce efforts in 2005. We also achieved record investment in the 21st Century Fund, Technology Parks, and incentives to attract high-wage employers to our state.

This year we accomplished one of our goals – a boost to economic opportunity for all Hoosiers. House Republicans will continue to focus on government efficiency and spending restraint as we work now to propel Indiana on the right track to fiscal integrity. For further details on our Right Track Indiana agenda, visit our website at www.in.gov/legislative/houseRepublicans/.



Rep. Espich confers with Rep. Brian Bosma

Education Funding

At the beginning of the 2003 session of the General Assembly, the governor proposed that education spending be flat-lined for the next biennial budget. If the governor's proposal had been implemented, schools in Indiana would have suffered greatly, possibly laying off teachers and postponing technology upgrades, among other things. This idea was unacceptable to me because it would have negatively affected what is most important – our children's education. As the session continued, legislators worked creatively to give schools in Indiana the necessary funding, a difficult feat considering Indiana's annual budget deficit of \$850 million.

The final budget approved by the General Assembly increases school operating funding by an average of 3.3 percent in 2004 and 2.9 percent in 2005. The budget will inject \$541 million of additional funding into the operating budgets of Indiana's 293 public school corporations. Higher education will receive more money too, with an increase of 5.3 percent in 2004 and 3.6 percent in 2005, for operations, research and research-oriented facilities.

The new school funding formula provides additional funding to growing school corporations in our state while protecting the funding for schools experiencing enrollment declines. No school will receive less than \$4,350 per student. Added to that is funding based on five factors: children enrolled in the free-lunch program, families in poverty, single-parent families, parents without a high school diploma and children who are learning English as a second language. This funding is provided in recognition of the added cost of educating disadvantaged and at-risk students.

Education remains my number one priority and I worked hard this session to provide increased funding for our schools. Our children deserve the best educational opportunities possible, even in a struggling economy.

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Biennial Budget

At the close of the 2003 legislative session, the Indiana House of Representatives voted in favor of HB 1001, the state budget bill, by a vote of 61-37.

This budget ensures public education is the top priority of our state, which was made possible by restraining spending on Medicaid and corrections.

Furthermore, this budget incorporates many House Republican economic development initiatives from our Right Track Indiana legislative agenda. These initiatives will bolster our state's struggling economy, creating better and higher paying jobs for the immediate future and in the long-term.

I believe this budget is a step in the right direction. Our next step is to ensure that we rein in our poor spending habits. State government must live within its means, just as Hoosier families do and I will continue to work to ensure spending discipline.

While I am concerned that our current situation has been derived by a lack of real leadership in our state, I am pleased that my caucus was able to lead the state this year in a positive direction. For these reasons I was willing to support this budget.



Rep. Espich shares ideas with Ways & Means Chairman Bill Crawford during budget negotiations.

Hoosier Rx

Hoosier Rx, Indiana's prescription drug program for low-income seniors, has recently changed formats. Instead of being issued a refund check after the prescription is purchased, a senior enrolled in the program can simply present his/her plan membership card at the retailer to receive the benefits.

Hoosier Rx covers all drugs that require prescriptions, as well as insulin. The changes to this program will be phased in over the next few months. Listed below are several prescription assistance programs currently being offered to Hoosiers.

Hoosier Rx

- Indiana's own discount prescription drug program.
- Provides low-income seniors with up to 50% savings on medications.
- A yearly benefit of up to \$1000.

For additional information please call (866) 267-4679

Pfizer for Living Share Card

- Designed to provide a bridge for a target group of Medicare beneficiaries until a Medicare prescription drug benefit is established.
- Seniors pay \$15 for up to a 30-day supply of Pfizer medicine.
- Convenient prescription refills at retail pharmacy.
- Free health education materials.

For additional information please call (800) 717-6005

Connection to Care

- Medical office-based program
- Provides nearly 30 Pfizer medications free of charge at the physician's request.

For additional information please call (800) 707-8990

Sharing the Care

- Pharmaceutical access program that donates Pfizer medications to low-income individuals through federally funded community, migrant and homeless health centers across the country.
- Developed in partnership with the National Governors Association and the National Association of Community Health Centers.

For additional information please call (800) 984-1500

LillyAnswers Card

- Provides discounted medications for low-income Hoosiers (annual individual income less than \$18,000, annual household income less than \$24,000).
- Seniors pay \$12 for a 30-day supply of any Lilly drug.
- Prescriptions are filled at participating retail pharmacies.
- Patient education and disease management tools.

For additional information please call (877) RX-LILLY 795-4559